

## MY SATURDAY CLASS

(CONTINUED).

### THE PRACTICAL SIDE.

Of course, even after my little Natural History Class was fairly started, there were many obstacles to overcome. Illness has been the most serious hindrance of all. I have now almost done away with unpunctuality by offering prizes at the end of the year to those who have attended our meetings regularly.

"Where there is a will, there is a way," and difficult problems can usually be solved if carefully considered and unravelled. Of course the way in which I have managed my own Natural History Class is very far from perfect; and no doubt any girl who would care to start one in her village or town could make new and improved plans of her own.

I have a small room, as I mentioned before, dedicated to the use of my girls in winter. The coloured plates are very useful to teach from, and my various collections of shells, butterflies and moths, and pressed seaweed and flowers and fossils have all proved sources of interest. I soon found out that to read aloud chapters from books on Natural History, which I myself enjoyed, was useless. The only way to impress facts on the girls' memories was to write them in very short, simple sentences. Our blackboard is usually carried downstairs for my class, and if I draw things in coloured chalks the general interest is aroused.

I think small beginnings are wisest, and I therefore started my class with only a few girls. At different times my pupils have inquired if I had objections to their bringing in a friend; and so my little school has gradually increased without any search for new girls on my part. As the ages of

the girls vary from seven to fourteen, I have to divide them into two classes. The ones under ten are taught their lessons orally, while those over that age learn some of theirs from books. Each child has a note book of her own; these books are used to write essays, &c., and for examinations, which I give about every two months, and I must say the girls take a keen interest in them.

The essays are most funny; I often have a real good laugh over them. "The moale is a little blac insect; it likes to live under the earth." "The tode is a spiteful beast, and was a todepole," &c., &c., *ad libitum*. The objection to these essays is that (in spite of all my efforts) the girls will copy each other so faithfully that it sometimes occurs that every essay is exactly the same! This is rather trying for the teacher's feelings, is it not?

On fine days I take the girls round the garden and show them our pets. On these occasions I take the opportunity to point out the necessity of cleanliness, proper feeding, providing of clean water and allowance of room, and other things needful to keep pets in comfort and health. As a rule after this we pass up to the field or lawn, and spend a short time in running, vaulting, three-legged races, egg and spoon competitions, &c. One of my present girls is most athletic and a splendid runner for her age. The fruit is a great temptation; and I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that the quantity of raspberries and strawberries in the available part of the garden has decreased considerably after the girls have departed.

I remember one incident which rather amused me. It was towards the end of the summer, when the gooseberries were ripe. Among the girls who came laughing and chatting into the garden when the class was over, was one who was wearing a long, red fishermen's cap, which hung down at the back of her head. After a few minutes' turn in the fruit garden I told the children it was time to go. As I was walking behind them (like a watchful shepherdess) I suddenly noticed that long red cap had grown extremely stout. I became suspicious; was it improbable that the contents was gooseberries? I enquired, and a giggle and a blush confirmed my suspicion; whereupon, checking a smile, I sternly forbade such deceitful ways! I often give them a handful of fruit if they resist the temptation to help themselves.



Flowers, too, are always a source of pleasure, the brightest always being the favourites. Very pleasant indeed are these long summer afternoons, which I enjoy as much as my pupils; and I feel sure that while teaching others, one learns one's-self.

### CHILDREN IN FICTION.

"By the banks of the river Pison is seen, lone-sitting by the grave of the terrestrial Adah, whom the angel Hader loved, a child; but not the same which I saw in heaven. A mournful hue overcasts its lineaments, nevertheless a likeness there is between the child by the grave and that celestial orphan whom I saw above; and the dimness of the grief upon the heavenly is a shadow or emblem of that which stains the beauty of the terrestrial. And this correspondence is not to be understood but by dreams."

So wrote Charles Lamb in that beautiful reverie of his called the "Child Angel," and those who would aspire to know children or to write of them must also know something of that Tutelar Genius of Childhood, who still goes "lame and lovely," of whom Charles Lamb speaks. And while I thought of these things I saw no longer before me the printed page, but seemed to be in some green garden, where children, of all sorts and sizes, flitted here and there, some wandering vaguely about, some intent on a game, sitting, standing, walking, lying on the grass.

Close to me was a child who sat quite alone, clasping a thin dog, and as I looked I remembered how years ago I knew this child, and wept over her sorrows, yet I could not remember her name, though I knew the dog's name was Scamp. It was this same child who sold matches once, and saw fairy visions as she struck one match after another of her unsold stock, sitting alone on a doorstep one freezing night. I have her picture, too, for Sir John Millais painted

her, and she is known by many different names. Looking about among the children, I see now many ragged, bare-footed children, whose sorrows added to the sorrow of my own childhood, but the child of the broom and the matches and of the broom and the dog are the only ones I recognise. Lo, there is a child called Jessica, and a boy called Christopher, who had an old organ.

In this garden the children keep together in family groups a good deal, I observe. There is a small, pale-faced boy with a big head. Once I adored that boy, his name is Paul Dombey; there are a great number who have a slight likeness to Paul, but I do not know them so well. They all have certain characteristics in common with which their Creator has endowed them. It is so long since I saw these children, but I loved them in my own childhood, and surely, the child that appeals to a child, that becomes a sort of playmate and companion, possesses a special virtue and charm of its own.

Three very quaint little girls are playing apart; one of them is more untidy than the others, her name is Joe; the pretty one is Amy; and the one with the extremely demure expression is Meg; there is a boy less substantial than the girls—Laurie was never quite so real a boy as the little women with whom he played.

There is another large group of children who keep together; among them the family likeness is even more marked than among the Dickens' children. Indeed, I find it difficult to distinguish one girl or boy from another. I never really liked these children; they are all *nice*, but they were never familiar friends like the tom-boy Joe, and the demure Meg. I always thought there was a tendency to priggishness among the young children, yet there are a few of them who stand out from among the rest as more familiar; Bobus, who was always likable in spite of his undeniable priggishness; Jock, Armere, Bobby, all Mother Cary's Chickens.

Flitting here and there among the other children is a small, fairy-like figure, with out-stand skirts and a quaint little hat, and to me she always repeats plaintively, "Be a blue and silver soldier, Dickie, dear Dickie, do." Queen Bee has a glamour all her own for "Old Sake's Sake." It is years since I heard of her, not, in fact, since I first made



her acquaintance when I was ten years old myself; if I knew her better now the glamour might fade, but as it is she flits, gleeful, gay, singing:—

And for old sake's sake she is still, dears,  
The prettiest doll in the world.

There is a boy here who bears a faint resemblance to Queen Bee, but the family likeness is not marked as it is in the young children. This boy's name is Ted; he has "thrilling blue" eyes, and following him is a very small, fidgety boy—his brother Val. I always meant to marry Ted when I grew up, but I have never met him since, and he still remains a shadowy ideal.

Down a long border of gay tulips wanders a small, black-headed baby, mowing down the brilliant flowers as he goes, wholly intent on his work of destruction, and regardless of the children near him. A red-haired boy, on a red pony, rides near him, enjoying the first exquisite thrill of that ride round the village green. Jackanapes is a child here among the other children, and it is a child he will always remain. "And he is a real V.C.," says a voice near; but Leonard scarcely seems to belong here in the sunny garden among the other children, he is too real, too sorrowful, his story is fraught with too much real sadness. There are so many Leonards, so many brave poor things. Turning away from him I see a small boy, with a stubborn face, and two pairs of socks on, one pair up and one pair down. "I'm hose-in-hose," Christopher explains to the gentle Mary, who is sewing the weeding-woman's bonnet with one orange and one canary-coloured string. There are children here who seem wholly out of touch with the others, children of whom stubborn-faced Christopher and Mary, and others like them, seem wholly unaware—they make no pause in their play when these lonely and shadowy children pass: such a child is fair-haired Eva, whose early death was a real bereavement to youthful readers of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Quite as unlike Eva as they are unlike Christopher and Mary are a girl and a boy who wander about hand in hand, the girl's face pert and discontented, the boy's curiously soft and girlish—both are self-conscious and self-absorbed. "They call us the Heavenly Twins," says the boy. "What, the signs of Zodiac?" someone asks. "No, the Signs of the

Times," says the boy as they wander away. Their place is taken by a small girl whose eyes look out bright and starry from the depths of her big sun-bonnet. This little girl's name is Dear: almost every one knows her, and she is the playmate of every child in the garden; and sure she is Dear to every one. Such children as Dear are under the special protection of that Tutelar Genius of Childhood.

Like, yet unlike, the Heavenly Twins are another girl and boy, in the rough clothes of farm children, tanned by the moorland sun and wind; the boy's expression is sad but intelligent, the girl's strangely passionate. They are David Grieve and his sister Louie, and already they bear traces of the tragic destiny ahead of them. Yet another pair wander here, unlike the Grieves, though these also are poorly dressed and in deep mourning. The girl is small, and clings to the boy's hand; he has a protecting air towards her, but they both seem on the point of tears. "If it was any bonnier it would strike me blind, Elspeth," says the boy in a voice that quivers in spite of his efforts to keep it steady. "I'm glad it's no bonnier, Tommy," says little Elspeth, blinking to keep the tears back and clinging yet closer to him. And behind Tommy and Elspeth follows a bigger child, a child who rocks her arms in distress as if she had some inkling of the fate which over hangs Tommy; yet if Tommy were to turn she would smile her crooked smile, and Tommy would look at her with his inscrutable eyes, as though he had some fore-knowledge of what will happen one day when He and She are alone together by Posen Water.

I see a boy who walks alone, whose oriental dress makes him seem strangely out of keeping with these other children of Western civilization; but two smaller boys are talking to him—these boys are extremely dirty and disreputable; their faces have a pleasing expression of innocence and impudence. The tall boy maintains an attitude of lofty dignity towards his small questioners, a dignity which makes no impression at all on Toddy and Budge. "They call me the Friend of all the world," the queer boy explains, but Toddy is entirely unimpressed, and calls him Kim in his queer, babyish gargon, while Budge more politely says "Mr. O'Hara." "Thish ish my Aunt Alishe's dog," explains Toddy, indicating a struggling mass of clothes and string in his arms, but even



as he speaks the animated bundle gets away, and Toddy and Budge start in pursuit, only to come into violent contact with a little girl who is also chasing some animal. "It wasn't really a baby, you know, it was a pig." "'Twashen't," says Toddy, "'twash my Aunt Alishe's dog Jerry, and he'sh got away." "My name is Alice," explains the little girl modestly, "but it really *was* a pig you know," and she said—"It was like this," explains Budge in his most judicial manner, but Alice in Wonderland is more than a match for him at logical reasoning, and the argument will be a long one.

In a group near are the April, May, and June Babies, and playing with them is a certain Reggie, who is a very nice little boy, though the others complain that his sister Mary doesn't always play fair. There is a sturdy, rosy, jolly-looking little boy watching them, and if they cry he calls them Mary Annish. Some people think he is nearly related to that child who goes "lame and lovely;" certainly he knows some secrets hidden from the other children, and known only to those whose love for children is very deep. There is an elusive little girl here who sometimes, in a vague way, reminds me of David, though they have no characteristic in common. She is known here as the only and original Annie and Louise, and she is a curiously lovable child, but no one knows very much about her, or if they do they won't tell. Perhaps David knows, he knows so many things; about Peter Pan for instance, and the boat the thrushes built, and the lost spade, and many other things. Sometimes David tells tales about these things to the other children, and they will all listen—even Kim, though some people say that Kim is jealous because David knows so much of that Tutelar Genius of Childhood.

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## THE ARTHURIAN LEGENDS.

King Arthur is represented as having been a British King, who in the sixth century united the British tribes in resisting the invasion of the pagan Saxons, and is therefore the champion not only of his people, but also of Christianity. His fame is widely spread, for he is claimed as a prince in Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, Cumberland, and the lowlands of Scotland—in a word, by all those countries where the Brithonic race spread.

We first hear of him in literature in the lays of the Welsh bards, supposed to be of the sixth and seventh centuries, but they do not assert him as a contemporary; indeed it is more than probable that he is not an historic personage at all, but an ancient Celtic deity, shorn of his divinity and given historic attributes, just in the same way as O-din, when he ceased to be the All-father or God of the Norsemen, came to be considered the remote ancestor of their kings. Still it is possible that there may have been a prince of that name in the sixth century, and naturally all the myths and legends of the remote ancestor or god would crystalize around him. The story of Arthur was begun in England by Geoffrey of Monmouth, a Welsh priest at the Court of Henry I. (1132-1135), who pretended that he had been given an ancient Welsh book to translate which told the history of Britain from the days when Brut, great-grandson of Æucas, landed on its shores. It was really only a clever putting together and invention of some Welsh and other legends, but it made as great a sensation as the tales of De Rougemont in later days. Geoffrey really thus created the heroic figure of Arthur, but his stories were told in Latin prose. They were soon, however, taken up in Normandy and France, and, added to from Breton legends, were made into a poem, so that Geoffrey's work was the source of the famous metrical romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In poetic